(c) whether it is also a fact that these stamp vendors remain in district and block headquarters only due to which common man is facing serious problems; and

(d) if so, the steps being taken by Government to solve the problems faced by the common man?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The State Government of Chhattisgarh did not allow commission to the Department of Posts on the cost based rates agreed by the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India. Therefore, the sale of revenue stamps by post offices in Chhattisgarh has been discontinued.

(c) and (d) The sale of revenue stamps and the other allied arrangements thereon in Chhattisgarh State is the prerogative and responsibility of the State Government.

Creation of focal agency

909. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the TRAI has urged States to create focal agency for better co-ordination and redressal of issues of service providers;

(b) if so, whether many cellular expansion plans have been held up as guidelines and policies regarding cell site installation, right of way and permission vary from State to State;

(c) if so, whether DoT has considered faster roll-out of telecom services in the country, especially in rural India which is dependent on the development of telecom infrastructure;

(d) if so, the number of States that have agreed; and

(e) the steps taken to start the projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) to (e) Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) is providing support for Rural Direct Exchange Lines (RDELs) in commercially unviable areas. So far 11.13 lakh DELs have been provided under this scheme and another 6.5 lakh are expected to be provided by March, 2007. Further, Government is in the process of taking necessary action to provide support for provision of infrastructure for mobile services in rural and remote areas of the country. A draft tender document for setting up and managing infrastructure sites and provision of mobile services in rural and remote areas of the country has been placed on the Department of Telecommunications website www.dot.gov.in on 21.11.2006 for inviting comments/suggestions from stakeholders.

As per targets fixed in New Telecom Policy, 1999 (NTP-99), Rural Tele-density of 4% was envisaged by 2010. This target is likely to be achieved much ahead of schedule. Government not restricting itself to above target, is also making efforts to provide one telephone connection per three households and one connection per two households in rural areas by 2007 and 2010 respectively.

Projects forwarded to NEC from States

910. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the projects forwarded to the NEC from different States during the years 2005-06 and 2006-07;

(b) the number out of it sanctioned, waiting for sanctions, returned and rejected, State-wise;

(c) the amount sanctioned against each alongwith the amount released, State-wise; and

(d) the details of the projects selected prior to 2005-06 but not completed and their status thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.